

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
October 18, 2012

COASTAL TRAIL PROJECT ASSISTANCE – PHASE II

File No. 08-115-02
Project Manager: Timothy Duff

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse an amount not to exceed \$300,000 to Coastwalk California, Inc. to: 1) develop a California Coastal Trail Association; 2) continue the Coastal Trail signing program; and 3) promote public use of and support for the Coastal Trail.

LOCATION: Statewide Coastal Zone

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Public Access

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Map of Coastal Trail Emblems Posted to Date](#)

Exhibit 2: [Map of Proposed Future Coastal Trail Emblem Postings](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31400 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed \$300,000 (three hundred thousand dollars) to Coastwalk California, Inc. (Coastwalk) to develop a Coastal Trail Association, continue the Coastal Trail signing program, and promote public use of and support for the Coastal Trail. This authorization is subject to the condition that prior to the disbursement of any funds, Coastwalk shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a work program, budget, schedule, and the names of any contractors to be employed in carrying out the project.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state’s coastline.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.

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3. Coastwalk California, Inc. is a nonprofit organization existing under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.”
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PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize a three-year grant to the nonprofit organization Coastwalk California, Inc. (“Coastwalk”) to develop a California Coastal Trail Association, continue the Coastal Trail signing program, and promote public use of and support for the California Coastal Trail (“CCT”). The grant would be designed as a challenge grant to help build Coastwalk’s long-term capacity and would be matched 1:1 by Coastwalk by the end of the three year period.

As with the Pacific Crest Trail and Continental Divide Trail, the CCT has the potential to not only be one of the great trails of our nation, but one that serves hundreds of thousands of users on a daily basis. From the remote windswept beaches north of San Francisco to the bustling commercial waterfronts and promenades of Southern California, the CCT offers a unique blend of experiences, from the wild and adventurous to the more laid back, for residents and tourists alike.

The CCT is the core of the Conservancy’s coastal access program and encompasses not only the lateral north to south trail but all of the vertical accessways and support facilities such as parking lots and restrooms that serve to connect the public to the state’s bluffs and beaches. Today, Conservancy assistance is needed to integrate this vast network of existing and planned future coastal accessways into a defined trail system that offers multiple recreation, transportation, and economic benefits to local communities. Establishing the proposed new trail association to assist coastal communities in planning, developing, managing, and promoting the trail will enable these communities to more efficiently meet increased demand for trails in the face of decreased state and local resources.

The California Coastal Trail Association will be modeled after other successful long-distance trail associations such as the nonprofit Pacific Crest Trail Association. In partnership with staff of the National Park Service (NPS) and State Department of Parks and Recreation, Coastwalk will conduct a statewide outreach program to solicit feedback from agency staff, elected officials, and trail advocates on how the proposed CCT association could best meet their stewardship needs and priorities. Regional focus group sessions will be held throughout the state to identify a collective vision for the association and to obtain the critical long term buy-in needed to grow and sustain it. Coastwalk will then prepare a comprehensive report that describes the association's operating elements and a funding strategy.

Following completion of the tasks described above Coastwalk will focus on building membership in the association and developing its programs. Local volunteer-based trail organizations and park agencies identified in the initial phases of the project will be asked to formally join the association as dues paying members, and to assist in recruiting new members. Coastwalk will also take the lead in planning and hosting the first annual association conference to bring members together to further develop the association’s programs and services and to discuss opportunities to expand membership.

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Coastwalk will also continue the CCT sign program that to date has resulted in the posting of the CCT emblem on over 400 miles of completed trail segments throughout the state (Exhibit 1). This is one of the key goals for the CCT from the Conservancy's 2007 Strategic Plan and the 2003 *Completing the California Coastal Trail* report. In the next phase of trail signing, Conservancy and Coastwalk staff will work closely together to implement the program, including meeting with the local agency staff and officials to obtain their approval to sign segments under their jurisdiction. Conservancy and Coastwalk staff have already identified an additional 100 miles of priority segments to sign, a majority of which are located in more urban, high use areas of central and southern California (Exhibit 2).

Finally, Coastwalk will assist the Conservancy in promoting and building public awareness of the CCT. Key goals of this effort will be to make it easier for users to find CCT segments, enhance user experience on existing segments, and assist local communities identify economic development opportunities associated with the trail. Coastwalk will help the Conservancy develop the CCT's online presence, including new web-based mapping system of the CCT and other content to be incorporated into a mobile device enhanced website and possible a new smart phone application.

Established in 1983, Coastwalk California has been the principal statewide nonprofit group supporting completion of the CCT. Over the past several years Coastwalk has collaborated with the Conservancy and other state and local agencies and nonprofit groups to promote the trail, including the posting of the CCT emblem on over 400 miles of existing trail up and down the coast. Coastwalk has also been instrumental in raising awareness of the trail with local and state elected officials, and has planned numerous events along the state's coastline highlighting the trail and the need for greater public support to get it completed. With local chapters in most coastal counties and a growing presence in communities up and down the coast, Coastwalk is well positioned to generate greater awareness and public support for future use and management of the trail.

Site Description: Covering roughly 1,200 of coastline, the CCT is planned to extend from Oregon to Mexico, and includes the network of trails and support facilities that connect visitors from inland areas to the coast. The CCT is a "braided" system of trails that offers a variety of routes to and along the coast for hikers, bicyclists and, along some segments, equestrians. The Pacific Coast Highway is also a "strand" in this system used by cyclists and, in some cases, hikers where private property forces them onto the highway. The CCT extends along sandy beaches, bluffs, piers, waterfronts, promenades and includes the necessary support facilities such as parking lots and restrooms to accommodate visitors. Wherever feasible, the CCT also serves those with disabilities.

Project History: For the past 12 years Coastwalk California has partnered with the Conservancy to promote the use and completion of the CCT, including grants awarded to map and sign the CCT in 2000, 2005, and 2008. Coastwalk also assisted the Conservancy with the preparation of the 2003 *"Completing the California Coastal Trail Report,"* and participated in the design of the CCT emblem that Coastwalk has had a leading role in posting along 400 miles of trail statewide to date.

In 2011 Conservancy staff assisted Coastwalk with the preparation of an application for a National Park Service technical assistance grant to receive support for the creation of a new trail

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association to help local, state and federal park agencies manage and maintain their trails. In late 2011 this grant was awarded, and over the past six months Coastwalk and Conservancy staff have developed a work plan to move the effort forward over the next three years.

Beginning in the spring of 2012 Conservancy staff has also worked closely with Coastwalk to develop a scope of work to be funded by the proposed Conservancy grant, including a requirement for significant matching funds to be provided by Coastwalk as shown in the project financing section below.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy:	\$300,000
Coastwalk, California Inc.:	<u>\$300,000</u>
Total Project Cost:	\$600,000

Two sources of Conservancy funding would be used for this project. The majority of the funds would be from an appropriation to the Conservancy for the Coastal Access Account. Consistent with the purposes for which this fund source was established, Coastwalk will use these to help local organizations develop, maintain, and operate the CCT.

The second source of funds for the project is an appropriation to the Conservancy from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006, Public Resources Code section 75001 *et seq.* ("Proposition 84"). Proposition 84 authorizes use of the bond funds for protection of beaches, bays and coastal waters and watersheds, including projects and expenditures to promote access to and enjoyment of the coastal resources of the state. Section 75060(b) of the Public Resources Code specifically allocates funding to the Conservancy for expenditure pursuant to the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. The proposed project will support the completion of the California Coastal Trail and promote access to and enjoyment of the State's coastal resources. Consistency of the project with the Conservancy's enabling legislation is discussed below in "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation."

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

This project would be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 9 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31400-31410), regarding public access and enjoyment of coastal resources. Section 31400 states the Legislature's intent that the Conservancy play a principal role in the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the coast. The intent of the proposed project is to continue development and improve long-term management of the CCT.

Public Resources Code Section 31400.1 provides that the Conservancy may award grants to nonprofit organizations to develop, operate or manage lands for public access to and along the coast, and 31400.3 authorizes the Conservancy to provide assistance to nonprofit organizations "in establishing a system of public coastal accessways, and related functions necessary to meet the objectives of this division." The activities that would be supported through the recommended

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grant to Coastwalk are all directly related to the development and operation of the CCT, a principal part of the system of public shoreline access.

Public Resources Code Section 31408 specifically directs the Conservancy to coordinate the development of the Coastal Trail. Under Section 31408(a), the Conservancy “shall, in consultation with the Department of Parks and Recreation, the California Coastal Commission, and the Department of Transportation, coordinate the development of the California Coastal Trail.” These agencies will be consulted in the development of the CCT, including development of the proposed CCT Association. Section 31408(b) states, “To the extent feasible, and consistent with their individual mandates, each agency, board, department, or commission of the state with property interests or regulatory authority in coastal areas shall cooperate with the conservancy with respect to planning and making lands available for completion of the trail, including constructing trail links, placing signs, and managing the trail.” Coastwalk and the Conservancy will work with all of the relevant state agencies in the development, signing and management of the CCT.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

The 2007 Strategic Plan describes development of the California Coastal Trail as the Conservancy’s “core public access strategy.”

Consistent with **Goal 1 Objective A**, developing the CCT Association and signing additional segments of the CCT will serve to support efforts to obtain consensus and refine the alignment of the Coastal Trail.

Consistent with **Goal 1 Objective B**, the project will result in the posting of CCT signs on up to 100 miles of existing trails within public and private ownerships.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy’s current Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy’s statutory programs and purposes:** See the “Consistency with Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation” section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
3. **Support of the public:** Strong public support has been repeatedly expressed for the California Coastal Trail. See Project Letters in Exhibit 3.
4. **Location:** The project is located within the coastal zone statewide.
5. **Need:** The Conservancy is the only state agency that currently has funding appropriated for development of the Coastal Trail. Additional funding is needed to fund Coastwalk’s

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development of a trail association, and to sign and promote the use and completion of the trail.

6. **Greater-than-local interest:** Establishing a statewide trail association to assist with the maintenance, operation, and promotion of the CCT will serve trail users and managers throughout the state, including the hundreds of thousands of visitors from throughout the country and world who visit the California coast each year.

Additional Criteria

13. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** Creation of a continuous California Coastal Trail has been a major goal from the outset of the state's Coastal Management Program. In 2001, Assembly Concurrent Resolution 20 declared the CCT an official state trail and urged the Coastal Conservancy to work cooperatively with other agencies to complete it. Senate Bill 908 (Chapter 446, Statutes of 2001) amended the Public Resources Code to add Sections 31408- 31409 directing the Conservancy to coordinate the planning and development of the CCT in consultation with the Coastal Commission and State Parks. Following approval of the CCT emblem by the Conservancy and Coastal Commission in 2006, Coastwalk began a signing program in cooperation with the Conservancy, Coastal Commission, State Parks, local agencies and land trusts that own and operate coastal park land. To date, over 400 miles of the CCT have been signed with up to 100 more miles to be signed in the next phase of funding.
15. **Cooperation:** Establishing a new statewide trail association promoting the stewardship and completion of the trail will require the cooperation of federal, state and local agencies, nonprofit groups and community leaders and volunteers.

CONSISTENCY WITH COASTAL ACT POLICIES:

Policies encouraging the development of public access facilities, including the Coastal Trail, are among the most prominent features of the state's Coastal Management Program. The California Coastal Act indicates in Public Resources Code 30001.5(c) that the "basic goals of the state for the coastal zone" include the need to "maximize public access to and along the coast ..." Public Resources Code Section 30210 requires that "... maximum access, which shall be conspicuously posted, and recreational opportunities shall be provided for all the people...". Public Resources Code Section 30530 expresses the intent of the Legislature that a program to maximize public access to and along the coastline be prepared and implemented "consistent with the provisions of Chapter 9 of Division 21" including the mandates for Conservancy action to create the Coastal Trail.

Similarly, the Coastal Act includes several references to the need to increase public knowledge of access opportunities and to involve community organizations in such efforts. Public Resources Code Section 30214(c) directs the Coastal Commission and other public agencies to "... encourage the utilization of innovative access management techniques including, but not limited to, agreements with private organizations which would minimize management costs and encourage the use of volunteer programs." Public Resources Code Section 30012 includes the

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Legislative finding that “an educated and informed citizenry ... is necessary to protect California’s finite natural resources [and] ... through education, individuals can be made aware of and encouraged to accept their share of responsibility for protecting and improving the natural environment.” These purposes would be promoted through continuation of the Coastwalk signing program, and the development of a trail stewardship association and web-based tools to be supported by the recommended grant.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed project actions are categorically exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15306, which exempts basic data collection and Section 15303, which exempts “...construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities, or structures...”. The proposed actions involve planning necessary to create a new trail association, and the posting of trail signs on existing or new posts or fencing. Section 15303(e) specifically provides an exemption for accessory structures such as fences.

Upon approval staff will file a Notice of Exemption for this project.